



Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
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[Electronic photo available]

High, Wide, and Handsome ---

IOWA BUCKS ARE AS GOOD AS THEY GET

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

I'd give almost anything to put my tag on him. After more than 30 years of sitting in a tree stand, he's the second biggest deer I've ever seen. He is truly the stuff that outdoor legends are made of. If you're a deer hunter, just a glimpse of the animal will take your breath away. We simply call him *The Hayfork Buck*.

We call him that because that's what his outsized, 12-point antlers look like --- the old time, long tined pitch forks that men used to use when pitching loose hay to hungry milk cows and draft horses.

I first saw the buck [at least the way he looks now] in November of 2003. It was one of those damp, foggy mornings that really puts whitetails on the move. Visibility was poor and the air was still. I guess I had started to zone out, when suddenly there he was standing statue-like just forty yards to the left. The longer I stared, the deeper reality sank in. Here was the buck of lifetime, and he was almost within my grasp.

The buck probably stood there for a total of two to three minutes. Then he slowly turned and disappeared back into the fog. Although I've had glimpses of *The Hayfork* four times since, that first encounter was the closest.

It's November again. The rut is on, and monster white-tailed bucks are on the prowl. For the Iowa's 30,000 archery deer hunters, November simply offers the best of the best.

Whether you judge them in terms of body size or in inches of antler growth, there is no denying that Iowa bucks grow to monstrous proportions. There are, in fact, few places on the entire continent where deer grow bigger or better than they do right here at home.

So how big are our deer? To date, Iowa has produced 19 of the all time top bucks ever recorded. That's more top deer than is currently listed by any other state or Canadian province. Think about that.

By the time the second week of November arrives, most bucks, including the real bruisers, have forsaken their normally nocturnal lifestyles. Locked into a perpetual search mode, they relentlessly cruise ridgetops, river bottoms, and brushy draws in hopes of finding does. Sometimes, these wandering bucks find rival males instead. When that happens, the Iowa timbers resound with the deadly clash of dueling antlers.

But even now, the big bucks never come easy. Tagging a mature animal still requires ample amounts of scouting, woodsmanship, and, above all, -- patience. Bagging a monster generally means passing up numerous six and eight pointers. That's tough. For many hunters the temptation of seeing those lesser bucks is just too great.

There are no guarantees in this game, and when the Big Buck finally does arrive, many hunters simply crack under the strain. After the drilling the Bull's Eye on plastic deer targets all summer, a hunter may easily miss the entire animal once the moment of truth arrives. It's called Buck Fever, and it is the only explanation as to why so many new broadheads end up imbedded in tree trunks instead of in deer.

So far this season, I've already passed on some six and eight-pointers. I'm holding out for the big one, you know, *The Hayfork*. I just know that he'll eventually show up some crisp, frosty morning. I just wonder where my arrow will go once he gets here.

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[Electronic photo available]

**IOWA WATER TRAILS PROGRAM WEB SITE AND GRANT
PROGRAM LAUNCHED**

DES MOINES - A new Iowa Water Trails program will change the way many Iowans regard their waterways through new approaches to accesses, mapping, and signs along Iowa waterways.

“Water trails are about creating fresh experiences from existing Iowa natural resources,” says Nate Hooegeveen, Iowa Water Trails Coordinator. “Our waterways, and rivers in particular, are incredibly overlooked as places to have wild experiences close to home.”

Water trails treat accesses as trailheads, and consider waterways as trails for point-to-point travel for people who canoe, kayak, float, or otherwise travel the waterways. The "trail" is the waterway itself.

The Iowa DNR Water Trails program is a cooperative program intended to assist local organizations and units of government in developing water trails on various waterways throughout Iowa. This program will provide both financial assistance (matching, study, and limited amounts of construction funds) and technical assistance to build water trails that adapt well to local waterways.

A growing list of resources in a “Water Trails Toolkit” is now available online at www.iowadnr.com/watertrails/.

One important aspect of the new program is that it establishes a statewide system of signage for consistent experiences across Iowa. However, the DNR will be flexible in accommodating local creativity and trails signage systems that have already been established.

Rivers and other water corridors contain Iowa's greatest remaining tracts of wildlife habitat and undeveloped lands. With diverse landscapes - anything from marshes, to clear streams lined by limestone bluffs, to prairies that slope down to a river's edge - they present a variety of experiences. These corridors are some of Iowa's best places for many types of recreation, from wildlife viewing and fishing to canoeing, various types of kayaking, or even tubing. This program will follow the Iowa Department of Natural Resources vision of leading Iowans in caring for our natural resources, while helping fulfill its mission to cooperate with individuals and organizations improve quality of life in Iowa.

For more information, contact Nate Hooegeveen, Iowa Water Trails coordinator, at 515-281-3134.

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**APPLICATION PERIOD EXTENDED FOR SPRINGBROOK STATE
PARK SPECIAL DEER HUNT**

GUTHRIE CENTER - Deer hunters interested in the Springbrook State Park Special Antlerless-Only Deer Hunt still have time to register. The application period for the December gun hunt has been extended to Nov. 28.

The special hunt will be held Dec. 3 and 4, opening weekend of Iowa's first shotgun deer season. Applications are available through the park office. Applications must include a check or money order for \$27 to cover the cost of the deer license. Hunters will also be required to possess a small game hunting license and pay the habitat fee if normally required to have them to hunt.

Registration is limited to 50 permits. A second license may also be requested at the reduced fee of \$12 if additional permits are available.

Successful applicants will be required to attend a safety and orientation meeting the morning of the hunt. Hunters are reminded that if they do not want the meat from the deer, they may donate this, or any, legally taken deer to the HUSH program. There are two lockers nearby, J & J Meats and Catering, in Panora, and Bagley Locker, in Bagley, who participate in the HUSH program. There is no additional cost for a hunter to donate a deer to the HUSH program.

The hunt is a population control hunt and will be limited to the harvest of only antlerless deer. All hunting will take place on park property, which will be closed to the general public for the duration of the hunt.

Springbrook State Park is located in Guthrie County, approximately seven miles north of Guthrie Center.

For more information or to request an application, contact the park office at (641) 747-3591.

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[Editor's Note: Hold this story until Nov. 10]

FALL FISHING IN THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER TAILWATERS

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The pull from below was pretty obvious this time. Another fish on. My first hit had been hard to feel; with the three-way rig's pencil sinker weighing as much as the nine-inch sauger. This second one was nine inches, too. But the thick yellow bass went into the cooler; the first keeper of the short afternoon on the Mississippi River tailwaters at Bellevue. We had wrapped up work by noon. It seemed a shame to drive home with a dozen boats bobbing in the waters just below the lock and dam. Switching from work boat to fishing boat, three of us motored in among them.

As we were getting our lines out, the guy next to us pulled in—and tossed back—a little sauger. Just up from us, another angler tossed a wide, 12-inch white bass back into the drink; good-naturedly complaining to his boat mates. From boat to boat, there was always a pole or two bending. “For the strict walleye-sauger guys, the stripers (white bass) are just a nuisance this time of year,” laughed Denny Weiss. But that’s why we were here.

And while it wasn’t quite the pace as the previous days, when they had kept dozens of stripers (how come I never get to fish one of *those* days?) we stayed busy for the hour and a half we played hooky. Those heavy sinkers bumping the bottom in about 20 to 25 feet of water kept our minnows in front of the schools of stripers pushing upstream on their fall feeding binge. The year classes were pretty distinct. Keep a 10-inch striper. Toss back a six-incher. Another yellow bass or two surfaced. “They’re not as prevalent as the whites, but we see a few of them,” assured Weiss.

The third pole in the boat had been quiet, until Caleb Schnitzler hauled up a 14-inch sauger; bigger than my two yellow bass combined. Weiss brought one up, too, before we headed in with a mix and match catch of 15 fish...most of them stripers. We’d tossed back about that many smaller ones.

Traffic on the water was pretty typical for a weekday. “We had about a dozen boats out this morning,” relayed DNR creel clerk John Heiara, a couple days ago. “Over the weekend (even with rain falling) there were about 20 to 25 on the water Saturday; mostly sauger fishing. But the stripers are running, too.” A heavy rain event or adjustments to the rollers on the dam can knock things out of whack for a few days. As long as water levels remain steady, fishing should be, too.

Tailwater Restrictions Kick in Soon

Get out and enjoy it. The cool weather fishing surge wraps up at the end of the month in key areas. If cold weather doesn’t ice the tailwater fishing by December 1, special restrictions will. The water just below the dams at Dubuque, Bellevue and Clinton is off limits from then until March 15. This is the third year of a five-year (minimum) program to study sauger and walleye mortality. During mild winters through the 1990s and early ‘00s, tailwater fishing rarely stopped. Perhaps not coincidentally, biologists charted an 80 percent drop in saugers in the area; much of it attributed to deep water mortality; as the popular game fish were hauled up from 30 to 60 foot depths. In ‘normal’ winters, cold and ice would have locked up access to the tailwaters and reduced angling pressure. Weather permitting, tailwaters remain open for anglers at Guttenberg, the Quad Cities and other Mississippi River hotspots. Biologists can compare fish survival and sizes over the years. Fishing is still allowed a short distance *below* the three tailwaters, though game fish concentrations are not nearly as high. Water downstream tends to freeze faster and stay frozen longer, though, than the roller dam-agitated tailwaters.

A year-round Mississippi River walleye slot limit remains in effect. All walleyes between 20 and 27 inches, which are caught on the Big Water, from Dubuque’s Pool 12

down to Pool 20 must be turned back into the water right away. Only one 'trophy' sized walleye a day, over 27 inches can be kept. Those 2003-passed regulations accompany existing (15-inch) minimum walleye size limits and combined walleye/sauger creel limits.

Late Season Bump for Antlerless Tags

Expect those county-by-county antlerless deer tags to get a little harder to come by. On November 12, hunters can purchase any remaining antlerless tags from the county quotas for use on the three days after Thanksgiving. The attraction is that firearms may be used, in a time span normally reserved for bow hunters. The idea is to take more does, just ahead of the traditional shotgun seasons. Only counties with antlerless tags remaining can be hunted during the mini-season. Most north-central and northwest quotas were sold out heading into this week. Wildlife biologists expect most activity to be in southern counties, where higher county antlerless quotas were established.

Bow hunting will continue statewide, regardless of a county's antlerless tag availability.

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NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION TO MEET THURSDAY IN DES MOINES

DES MOINES - The Natural Resource Commission (NRC) of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will meet at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, Nov. 10, in the fourth floor conference room, Wallace State Office Bldg., in Des Moines. The meeting is open to the public.

The commission has added an item to its agenda released last week. Commissioners may review a proposed contested decision regarding a dock permit issued to Okoboji Boat Works on West Okoboji Lake. The decision by an administrative law judge supported the DNR's renewed permit, and finds the permit to be in compliance with the law.

Members of the NRC are Joan Schneider, Randy Duncan, Carol Kramer, Richard Francisco, Janice Marcantonio, Lennis Moore and Liz Garst. The DNR Director is Jeffrey Vonk.

The following is the agenda for the November meeting.

- Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes of Oct. 13 Meetings
- Director's Remarks

- Construction Projects
- Land Acquisition
 - Loess Hills State Forest, Harrison County – Harrison County
 - Upper Iowa River Wildlife Area, Winneshiek County – Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF)
 - Leo Shimon Marsh Wildlife Management Area, Pocahontas County – INHF Donation
 - Pine Lake State Park, Hardin County – Tullock and Gunderson Donation
 - Otter Creek Marsh, Tama County – Sharp Donation
 - Larry Wilson Legacy Marsh, Dickinson County – INHF
 - Dewey’s Pasture Wildlife Management Area, Palo Alto County – INHF
- Meeting Dates and Locations for 2006
- Rulemaking for Chapter 18, Rental Fee Schedule for State-owned Property, Riverbed, Lakebed and Waterfront Lands
- Rulemaking for Chapter 16, Public, Commercial, Private Docks and Dock Management Areas
- Conservation and Recreation Donations
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 94, Nonresident Deer Hunting
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 114, Nuisance Wildlife Control
- Final Rule – Chapter 81, Sport Fishing Rule
- Final Rule – Chapter 86, Turtles
- Final Rule – Chapter 87, Mussel Regulations
- Petition for Rulemaking – East Okoboji Lake Improvement Corporation, Inc., Dickinson County
- Timber Sale – Shimek State Forest, Lee County
- Timber Sale – Shimek State Forest, Lee County
- Timber Sale – Stephens State Forest, Lucas County
- Storm Lake 28E Agreement
- Storm Lake Amendment to Dredging
- Honey Creek State Park, Appanoose County – Electrical Substation Easement
- Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area, Linn County – Waterline and Pumping Station Easement
- Lake Shawtee Development Update
- Proposed Contested Case Decision – City of Okoboji
- General Discussion
- Items for Next Meeting, Dec. 8, in Des Moines

For more information, contact Karyn Stone at 515-281-8650.

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NO HIBERNATION FOR KEEPERS OF THE LAND VOLUNTEERS

DES MOINES – As the weather turns cold, volunteer opportunities in Iowa's natural resources change, but don't disappear.

The huge prairie rescue and river cleanup projects of the past few months have given way to smaller, on-going opportunities. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Keepers of the Land volunteer program encourages Iowans to keep active in natural resources, through a variety of fun projects.

Various state parks invite handy, or just plain hardworking volunteers to help with construction and maintenance projects. Parks including Dolliver, Green Valley, Lake Manawa, Mines of Spain, Springbrook, Union Grove, Wildcat Den and others need volunteers to help improve and maintain trails, refurbish buildings, repair picnic tables and more.

Several DNR bureaus have opportunities for volunteers, as well. Lend a hand, and a good set of eyes, to statewide wildlife observation efforts. Wildlife officials request that volunteers help identify raptor species using binoculars and digital cameras.

Volunteers can also help wildlife officials monitor chronic wasting disease. Duties include making phone inquiries to hunters, recording information and helping to remove samples. In the water quality bureau, volunteers can help make GPS maps of various environmental sites.

Find details about these and other Keepers of the Land volunteer opportunities, as well as an on-line events calendar, at www.keepersoftheland.org. All opportunities offer flexible time commitments and schedules. As fall drifts into winter, look for more indoor volunteer opportunities, including website construction, slide formatting and permit writing.

The DNR will honor all volunteers, whether weekend warriors or participants in long-term projects, at its 2005 Volunteer Awards Banquet on Nov. 12. The ceremony, "Honoring our Most Valuable Resource," will recognize award winners and nominees in various categories. It will take place at the Des Moines Science Center.

For more information, contact Merry Rankin at (515) 281-0878 or at Merry.Rankin@dnr.state.ia.us.

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A GIFT OF IOWA'S NATURE FOR SOMEONE WHO ENJOYS THE OUTDOORS

AMES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has the gift for the person who is difficult to buy for, and loves the outdoors - "A Gift of Iowa's Nature."

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources – Forestry Bureau has created a way to give a gift of native trees and shrubs this holiday season. The Iowa State Forest Nursery, located in Ames and Montrose, raises high quality native tree and shrub conservation seedlings for Iowa residents to plant in a backyard, small acreage or larger landholding. To promote and encourage the planting of more native trees and shrubs for songbird and wildlife habitat, state foresters, environmental and sportsmen's organizations have designed six (6) packets of native trees and shrubs seedlings for purchase this holiday season. The recipient will receive a gift certificate for the holiday season, and the packets will be delivered in the spring.

The native tree and shrub packets available are:

Songbird Packet – 20 trees (8 to 24 inches tall) for \$20 (includes shipping) that is designed for a larger backyard habitat project. The Songbird Packet includes two bur oaks, two white pines, four wild plum, four chokecherry, four gray dogwoods and four serviceberry. This packet is recommended by Audubon Iowa.

Wildlife Packet – 200 trees (8 to 24 inches tall) for \$90. This packet is for small acreage owners who have one-half to one acre to plant and includes 50 white pine, 50 bur oak, 50 gray dogwoods and 50 highbush cranberry. Shipping in the spring is \$10.

Turkey Packet – 200 trees (8 to 24 inches tall) for \$90. This packet provides mast trees for that one-half to one acre planting and includes 50 bur oak, 50 white oak, 50 pin oak and 50 gray dogwoods and is recommended by the Iowa Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. Shipping in the spring is \$10.

Pheasant Packet – 200 trees (8 to 24 inches tall) for \$90. This packet provides food and winter cover and includes 50 redcedar, 50 wild plums, 50 ninebark and 50 gray dogwoods and is recommended by the Iowa Pheasants Forever chapters. Shipping in the spring is \$10.

Quail Packet – 200 trees (8 to 24 inches tall) for \$90. This packet provides food and winter cover and includes 100 wild plum and 100 gray dogwood and is recommended by DNR wildlife biologists. Shipping in the spring is \$10.

Create Your Own Packet – 200 trees (8 to 24 inches tall) for \$90. You can choose up to 4 different species in units of 50 plants for your own special wildlife design. Shipping in the spring is \$10 or pick it up directly from the State Nursery in late April to mid May.

To receive the gift certificate in time for the holidays, orders must be placed by Dec. 20. Orders are accepted by phone, e-mail or regular mail. The State Nursery will send a gift certificate to the recipient and identify whom the gift was from. All packets

may be purchased for individual use. These packets also make a wonderful house warming gift.

The trees and shrubs will be delivered between early April to mid May. To order or for more information about the packets and gift certificate, call the State Forest Nursery at 1-800-865-2477 or go on line to www.iowadnr.com/forestry/

Please support the effort to expand songbird and wildlife habitat for today and for tomorrow by giving a gift of Iowa's nature.

For more information, contact John Walkowiak, chief of the DNR forestry bureau, at 515-242-5966.

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GET READY FOR SPRING PLANTING

CHARITON - With winter approaching, planting trees and shrubs might be about the furthest thing from one's mind. But right now is an ideal time to start planning.

"As soon as you have reviewed your objectives and studied the quality of the planting site and the plant species suitability, you should quickly place your tree or shrub order," said Duane Bedford, district forester with the Iowa Department of Natural Resource forestry bureau, stationed in Chariton. "If you wait until just before planting time in April or May you may be left out in the cold because some of the plants you'll need will already be sold."

When selecting plant species landowners need to consider where the plants originate. "Local Iowa seed sources survive and grow better than trees grown from seed collected in other states," Bedford said. The DNR's State Forest Nursery in Ames sells Iowa grown conservation tree and shrub seedlings each year to Iowa landowners. There are 23 species of hardwood trees, seven species of evergreens, and 15 species of shrubs to choose from. Prices range from \$0.25 to \$0.45 per plant. There are also available six different packets of trees and shrubs prepared especially for turkey, pheasant and quail, songbirds, and general wildlife that sell from \$20 to \$90 per packet. Bedford advises interested landowners to contact the State Forest Nursery at 1-800-865-2477 or order on line at www.iowadnr.com/forestry/.

If planting 10, five or even two acres sounds like a tremendous undertaking, a tree planter, available for rent by many county conservation boards, can plant 300 to 600 trees and shrubs each hour. The planter is pulled behind a tractor. "If you don't wish to do the planting yourself, a number of individuals and small firms do contract tree planting," Bedford said. Go to www.iowatreeplanting.com for more information.

“Your local DNR District Forester can offer forestry advice on where to plant and what to plant and may help get qualifying landowners cost-share assistance for tree plantings available through the Farm Service Agency’s riparian buffer strip program and bottomland hardwood program,” Bedford said. “Additional cost-share funds are available through local Soil and Water Conservation District offices from the Resource Enhancement and Protection program (REAP).”

Also, the Iowa state chapters of the National Wild Turkey Federation and local Pheasants Forever chapters often provide some cost-share support for conservation plantings for turkey habitat or pheasant habitat.

For advice on tree and shrub planting including cost-share programs, species selection, site preparation, and plantation maintenance, as well as advice on woodland management, get the name of your local DNR district forester at www.iowadnr.com/forestry/.

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